



# National Transportation Safety Board

## Marine Accident Brief

### Sinking of Fishing Vessel *Allison C*

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<b>Accident no.</b>	DCA12LM028
<b>Vessel name</b>	<i>Allison C</i>
<b>Accident type</b>	Sinking
<b>Location</b>	35° 31.78' N, 123° 52.46' W; about 125 miles west-southwest of Point Piedras Blancas, California
<b>Date</b>	September 20, 2012
<b>Time</b>	2030 Pacific standard time (coordinated universal time –8 hours)
<b>Injuries</b>	None
<b>Damage</b>	Total loss of 112-gross ton vessel and cargo; value estimated as \$277,000
<b>Environmental damage</b>	None observed
<b>Weather</b>	Seas 8–9 feet with 23-knot winds; clear visibility; water temperature 55°F
<b>Waterway information</b>	Near coastal waters, central California

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On September 20, 2012, about 2030 local time, the 76-foot-long commercial fishing vessel *Allison C* sank about 125 miles off the coast of California, west-southwest of Point Piedras Blancas, after the vessel's engine room flooded. The three crewmembers and their cat abandoned the *Allison C* and were rescued without injury. The value of the vessel and its cargo was estimated as \$277,000.

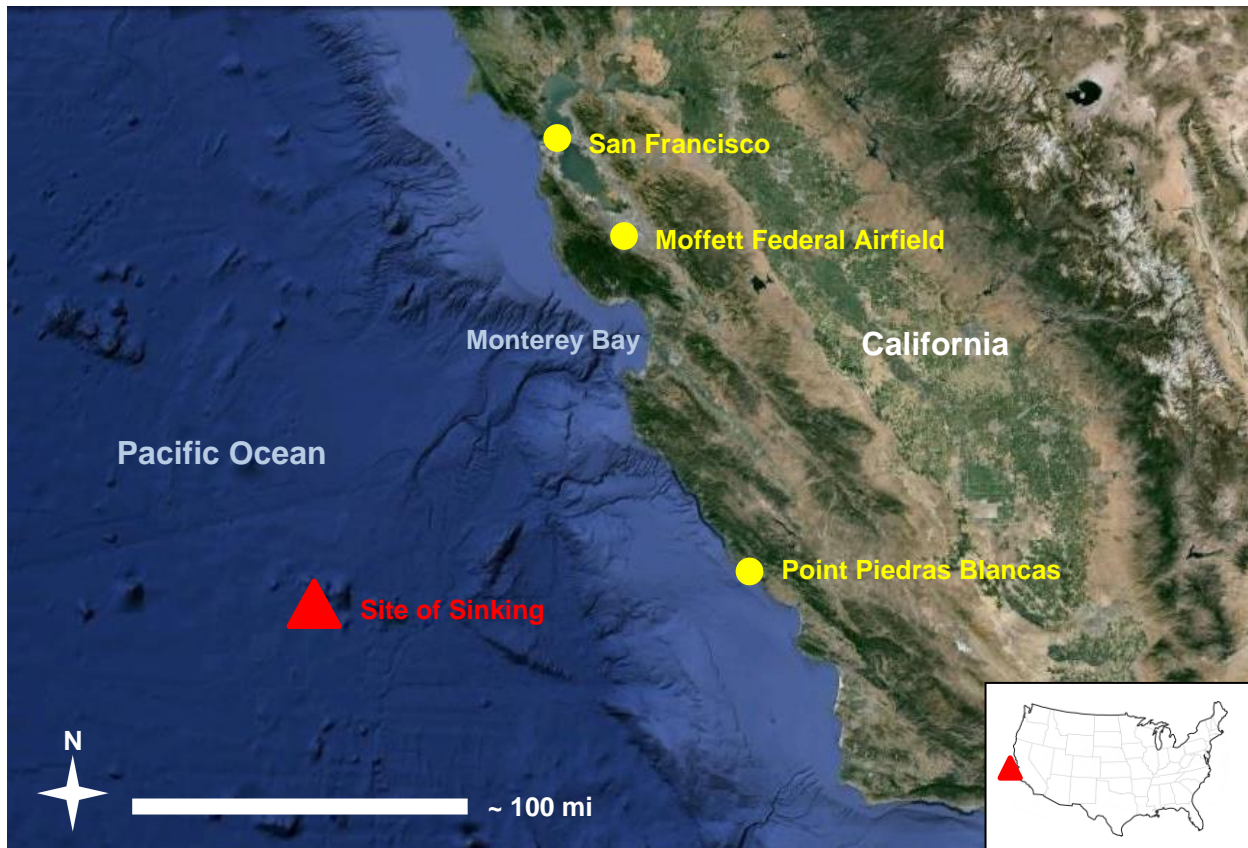


The *Allison C* before the accident. (Photo provided by John S. Bateman)

Several hours earlier that day, the three crewmembers were fishing for albacore tuna on a course of 300 degrees true, at 6 knots, in water about 2,000 feet deep. The seas were 8–9 feet and the wind was about 23 knots out of the northwest. Suddenly, the vessel's internal high water alarms

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sounded and the crewmembers went to the engine room to investigate. They found about 1 foot of water beneath the engine transmission and about 6 inches of water in the forward part of the engine room. Initially, the crewmembers could not identify the source of the incoming water. They found no leaks when examining the propeller shaft packing and both through-hull fittings. They did not recall hearing any noise, feeling any impact, or seeing any object in the water that might have caused a breach in the hull. About 1400, after the water level in the engine room had risen an additional 2 feet, the crew placed a Mayday call.



**Aerial image of the central California coastline, including the site of the sinking. (Background by Google Earth)**

The Mayday call was received by the Command Center at US Coast Guard Sector San Francisco. The Command Center issued an urgent marine information broadcast (UMIB) and requested a Coast Guard C-130 aircraft and any Department of Defense (DOD) long-range helicopters to respond. About 35 minutes later, a C-130 arrived on scene, and its crew dropped three pumps, an inflatable liferaft, and handheld radios.

The *Allison C*'s crew eventually found a golf ball-sized hole in the vessel's hull underneath the engine transmission. Efforts to patch the hole were unsuccessful, including an attempt by the master to dive underneath the vessel using his SCUBA gear to plug the hole. In addition, the crew was unable to keep up with the flooding using the air-dropped pumps. The first pump worked, but kept clogging due to debris in the engine room. The crew was unable to activate the second pump, and the third pump landed 5 feet from the vessel and immediately sank. After about 4 hours, the master told the crew to begin preparations to abandon ship. The California National Guard's 129th Rescue Wing launched an HH-60G helicopter and an MC-130P low-level air refueler from Moffett Federal Airfield. A good samaritan vessel, *CSAV Lincastan*, arrived on scene and stood by for more than an hour while the *Allison C*'s crew prepared to abandon ship. About 1830, the three

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crewmembers donned their survival suits, deployed the inflatable liferaft, and evacuated together to the liferaft.

About 2000, the three crewmembers were successfully hoisted to safety by the crew of the HH-60G helicopter and flown to Moffett Federal Airfield. They were reported to be in good physical condition, and they declined medical treatment.

The Coast Guard determined that salvage efforts for the *Allison C* would be unproductive, and all on-scene units were ordered to stand down. The vessel sank about 2030, shortly after the units left the scene.



**The inflatable liferaft from which the three *Allison C* crewmembers were hoisted. A California National Guard rescue swimmer can be seen near the liferaft's entrance. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Jimmy Ford, California National Guard)**

The captain, age 58, did not have a Coast Guard-issued license, nor was he required to. He had 33 years of commercial fishing experience and had owned/operated a total of eight commercial fishing vessels, including the *Allison C*, which he bought in 1999.

No evidence indicated that the condition of the vessel or the performance of the crew contributed to the sinking. The weather and environmental conditions were moderate and the search and rescue response was timely and appropriate.

## Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the sinking of the *Allison C* was a loss of hull integrity from a leak in the engine room, which led to uncontrollable flooding.

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### Vessel Particulars

Vessel	<i>Allison C</i>
Owner/operator	John S. Bateman
Port of registry	San Diego, CA
Flag	United States
Type	Commercial fishing vessel
Year built	1986
Official number (US)	697944
IMO number	N/A
Construction	Steel
Length	76 ft (23.16 m)
Draft	10 ft (3 m)
Gross and/or ITC tonnage	112 gross tons
Engine power; manufacturer	475 hp (354.2 kW); diesel
Persons on board	Three

**Adopted: April 15, 2014**

The NTSB has authority to investigate and establish the probable cause of any major marine casualty or any marine casualty involving both public and nonpublic vessels under 49 *United States Code* 1131. This report is based on factual information provided by the US Coast Guard from its informal investigation of the accident. The NTSB did not conduct its own on-scene investigation.